

A Brief History of Palm Beach Community College South 1973-1994

By Laura R. Collins



PALM BEACH COMMUNITY COLLEGE - SOUTH CAMPUS



**Edward M. Eissey serves as PBCC president,
and the College is governed by the Palm Beach Community College
District Board of Trustees.**

**Dan L. Terhune is Provost of PBCC South.
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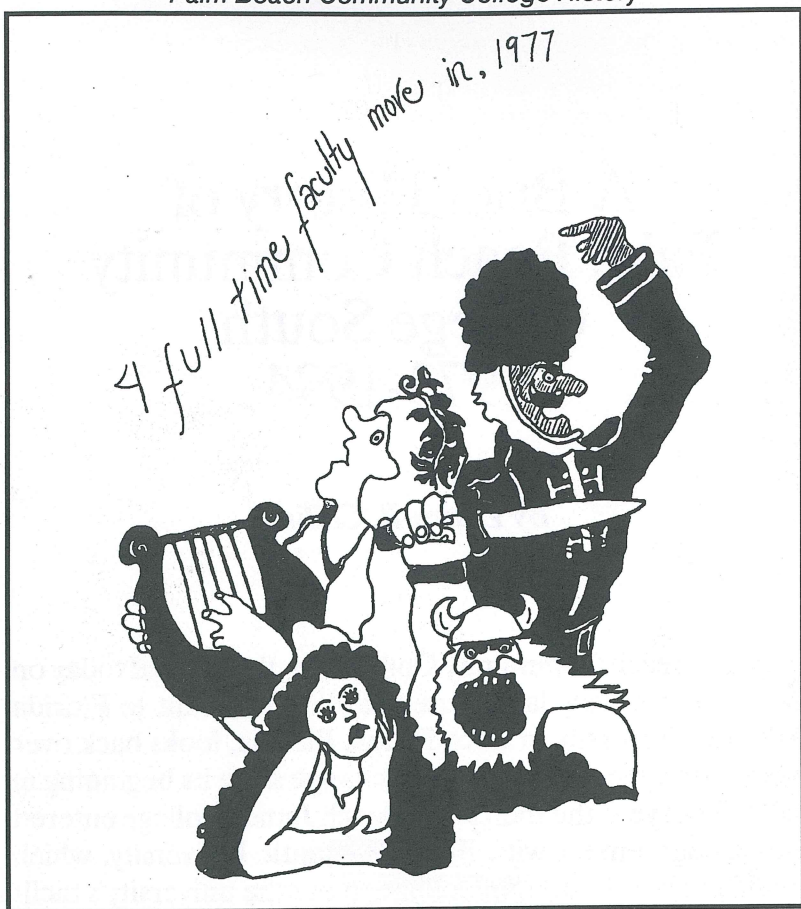
A Brief History of Palm Beach Community College South 1973-1994

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Palm Beach Community College South, situated today on its attractively landscaped campus adjacent to Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida, looks back over twenty-one years of growth and change since its beginning in 1973. That year the then Palm Beach Junior College entered into an agreement with Florida Atlantic University, which would enable the Junior College to use the university's facilities to offer lower-division courses in South Palm Beach County. FAU offered classroom space, the use of one dormitory, and access to all FAU facilities including the library.

Palm Beach Junior College President Harold Manor named James W. Tanner co-ordinator of the South Center at FAU, and that December, 1973, Mr. Tanner enrolled about 75 students in six classes to be held in FAU's General Classroom South.

Students responded enthusiastically to this new program of offerings in the South County area, and Dr. Manor and the PBJC administration realized that the center at Boca Raton would answer a real need among prospective students



Clockwise from top left, Dan Terhune, Leonard Bruton, Peter Krieger, Laura Collins. Sketch by Linda Summers.

of all ages in South Palm Beach County. As a result, in January, 1974, the College offered several day and night classes in FAU classrooms, and Mr. Tanner and Dr. Harris McGirt began to work out of an office at the A.D. Henderson University (Elementary) School, where the Junior College would offer additional night classes. The college was pleased to be able to use the Henderson facilities, which were excellent in many ways, but since HUS served grades one through eight, and had been designed and furnished for children in those grades—with small chairs in most of the rooms, for

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instance—that facility was not entirely suitable for adult students, and all concerned hoped for accommodations which would better fit their needs. Students seemed cheerfully stoic about the many inconveniences, however, and we made the most of our many advantages.

First Full-time Faculty

The South Center began the Fall Semester of 1977 with two administrators, one secretary, and South's first full-time faculty. James Tanner and Harris McGirt did all the counseling and scheduling with the help of one secretary—first, Ms. Mabel DePew, and later, Ms. Rebecca Komack—and the full-time faculty members were Laura Collins, English, Dan Terhune, Math, Leonard Bruton, History and Social Science, and Peter Krieger, Science. These teachers, and some who commuted from the main campus to teach courses not offered in our limited schedule, used such available space as the Henderson School Cafetorium (where there would not be time to whisk away the remains of the children's lunch before Betty Blanton's Modern Dance class), and the outside ball court and swimming pool, where she taught night classes in folk-dancing, and swimming "under the stars." Also used by arrangement with FAU were rooms in the T-Buildings, or "Temporary" buildings, so-called since they had been constructed for temporary use by the U. S. Army Air Force during World War II. Linda Summers, the first full-time art teacher, taught in one such room while it was still being cleared of old signs, paint cans and used lumber stored there for years.

During the next two or three years the administrative offices of Mr. Tanner and Dr. McGirt were moved from the Henderson Building to mobile structures set up on the strip of land behind Henderson school, and Registrar Leslie Monas (now Dionne), was established in a second mobile structure where, in those days before she had computers, she did all the necessary work by hand. Leona Opalio was cashier, and Mitchell Manin was assistant to Mr. Tanner.

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Our position as a small center just beginning, with no physical plant of our own, and very few amenities, perhaps caused the South Center people to experience a camaraderie that may be rare in more settled and comfortable environments. The administrators, faculty, staff and students often joined in activities and projects, and one-such grew from somebody's idea that a little patio with some tables and benches situated in the "court" formed by the three office trailers would be nice for the students during registration, and at all times as they came and went on business with the dean or the registrar or the faculty, whose offices were now located in a third trailer. On more than one back-breaking occasion, then, Dan Terhune, Leonard Bruton, Harris McGirt, Jim Tanner, and some hardy students laid paving stones, and eventually set up patio tables and benches, which students, and many who passed by, did enjoy.

Site Dedication

In the hope that The South Center would become a permanent campus, the College held a Site Dedication ceremony on that section of the Florida Atlantic University campus leased to Palm Beach Junior College through the Florida Board of Regents—the site on which Palm Beach Community College now stands. From a temporary platform on the old Air Force runway PBJC President Edward Eissey, FAU's President Glenwood Creech, Dean James W. Tanner, Dr. Harris McGirt, other officers of both institutions, and of the city of Boca Raton, the Reverend Ronald J. Dingle, faculty, students and friends, spoke and made music. In the midst of a strong wind and gusts of misty rain they conducted this ceremony of hope for the materialization of a future Palm Beach Junior College South. Mrs. Regina Waterhouse's Boca Raton High School Choral Ensemble and Cy Pryweller and the PBJC Brass Ensemble made elegantly beautiful music, after which the hardy group enjoyed refreshments on the runway in spite of the caterers' announcement that they did not "cater in the rain."

Palm Beach Community College History **Squeezed Out**

At the same time that student demand for more classes grew at the new Junior College Center, enrollment at Florida Atlantic had greatly increased also, and the university needed its space. Having no other facilities in South County but those of FAU, and faced with numbers of students eager to enroll for lower-division courses, Dean Tanner and Provost Patricia Dyer scoured Boca Raton in search of classrooms, hoping to rent space in schools, churches, lodge halls — but found nothing. Thus South faculty and students found themselves one semester only able to use FAU's main classrooms at 7:30 A.M. and after 4 P. M., and Henderson School classrooms only at night. Dr. Dyer, in desperation, negotiated with FAU to renovate some roughly finished unpartitioned space in one of the university's "Temporary" buildings. Meanwhile the junior college had to use these huge "rooms" without renovation, and some teachers actually held classes simultaneously in the same space, one class at either end of the room. Both teachers and students had "pioneer experiences" until later in that year, when PBJC had these spaces converted into classrooms, and began to acquire the modular buildings.

First Provost

Dr. Patricia Dyer, the first Provost of Palm Beach Junior College South, had been named to her position in 1982, and after the scramble for classrooms that Fall, she had the satisfaction of seeing Modular Classrooms installed on the recently dedicated permanent site of Palm Beach Junior College South. The "mods," which arrived on campus in two sections each, on flat-bed trucks, were completed on the present site, and each one provided a single classroom. With the new classrooms on the permanent site, then, all the old mobile structures were moved to that site from the Henderson School location, and with some additional ones, were used for administrative and faculty offices.

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By December 1983 six modular buildings were on the permanent site, five to be used as classrooms, and one to be used as the Registrar's office. Stafford Mooney, history instructor, and one of the first Division Chairs, remembers the warm satisfaction he felt one cold January (1984) morning as he and his young son Jimmy, a student at Henderson school, went with Dr. Dyer from mod to mod, turning on the lights and heat, and checking to see that the classrooms were ready for students. Not luxurious, but satisfactory indeed to students and faculty who had been flinging themselves about the FAU campus at odd hours to meet in widely disparate, often primitive, facilities. The number of mods needed by the South Campus of Palm Beach Junior College has increased over the years, and the South now has nineteen of these buildings, which blend attractively with its new permanent buildings.

During the years 1982-1985 Stafford Mooney and Dan Terhune served as chairs of the Humanities and Math/Science Divisions of the office of Academic Dean James Tanner, and when in 1982 Provost Patricia Dyer was named Vice President for Academic Affairs of Palm Beach Junior College, President Eissey named Dean Tanner Acting Provost.

Dr. Margaret Maney, who became Provost in 1984, worked vigorously, as had Dr. Dyer, to further stabilize the growing campus — always addressing the continuing need for new and better facilities, additional faculty, and an aesthetically pleasing campus. Dr. Maney energetically oversaw Palm Beach Junior College's extensive landscaping of the South's site, and during this period she was often to be found planting shrubs and pulling weeds. Since this period, the College has provided South Campus with a complete and effective physical plant staff to cope with its growing needs.

Terhune Returns

Dr. Dan Terhune, who had begun at the South Center in 1977 as its full-time Math Department, left his position as Division Chair at the South Campus in January, 1987 (suc-

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ceeded by Dr. Joseph Bukowsky), to assume the position of Dean of Instruction at the North Campus, now the Eissey Campus, but in 1988 Dr. Terhune returned as Palm Beach Community College South's third provost. With the retirement of Dean Tanner in 1993, Dr. Bukowski became Dean of Instruction.

From the beginning in 1977, with a full-time faculty of four working with approximately 300 students, PBCC South has grown to support a faculty of thirty-four, with an adjunct faculty of about 120, six administrators and 30 staff, serving approximately 4,000 students. The campus is enriched as well by strong student organizations including the Student Government Association, the honorary Phi Theta Kappa, and various student activities and events including drama and intramural athletics.

Expanding Facilities

By 1990 both wings of the South's first permanent classroom building were in use, with a second building, a five story administrative structure to house executive offices, the offices of the registrar, and student services, including a cafeteria, opening in the Spring of 1992. PBCC South's new Gymnasium, which will be dedicated in February, 1994, makes possible the expansion of our physical education classes and intramural programs. The gym has a fitness center, a dance studio, outdoor tennis courts, dressing rooms and shower facilities, all of which students welcome.

The original two-story classroom building contains attractively decorated, well-equipped classrooms, administrative and faculty offices, science and computer labs, and art facilities; it is built around a lovely central court where each day PBCC South students of all ages meet, socialize, study, lounge and move continuously about the business of modern college life. Many students are fresh from high school, but many more are not. They range in age from 17 to 85, and may have toddlers at home, or adult offspring out in the world, or offspring also attending PBCC, and almost certainly each

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one holds one or more jobs, besides those at home and school.

Begun under the conscientious direction of President Harold Manor, and enthusiastically defended and supported by President Edward M. Eissey, Palm Beach Community College South has energetically served thousands of students since 1973, and looks forward with confidence and optimism toward the educational challenges of the future.

--Laura R. Collins

